

**Workplace Trust in the Finnish Education System – A Principal’s Perspective**

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Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract  <p>Trust is term that spans a variety of disciplines. The study of workplace trust is one of the main fields in trust research. Numerous studies have noted differing operationalisations of trust, which can be dependent on cultural context. Focusing attention on the Finnish educational context provides an opportunity to closely examine trust in a specific working environment, with comparisons to other cross-cultural studies. Specifically, two aims were considered: how is trust in the Finnish education system from a managerial perspective conceptualised, and how the conceptualisation of trust relates to the representation of professionalism in the Finnish education system. Grounded theory and social representations were utilised to examine the construction of trust with the workplace. It was found that that trust was conceptualised over 4 key areas: building trust through open communication, agreeing on procedures, professionalism prioritised over emotion, and working for common goals and higher purpose. Professionalism was found to be highly interlinked with open communications and agreeing on procedures. Overarching themes of the study were further discussed, and directions for future trust research were suggested.</p>			
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## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 Trust

Trust is one of the keys to constructive human relationships (Tan & Tan, 2000). It is a concept that spans a variety of disciplines, including management, ethics, psychology, sociology, and economics (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007). Although trust can benefit from this multidisciplinary approach, it also presents complexity for defining the concept, which is in part due to the varied fields of research that operationalise and measure trust. (Dietz & N. Den Hartog, 2006). The vast number of interpretations results in trust being defined in numerous frames of reference: as an intention, an internal action (choice), as synonymous with the concept of trustworthiness, a facet of personality that remains relatively unchanged throughout life, an ability to cooperate, a belief, and as an ability to take risks (Colquitt et al., 2007).

In addition to the various definitions of trust, there are three broad areas in which these definitions are employed: intra-organisation, inter-organisational, and trust between organisation and their patrons (Dietz & N. Den Hartog, 2006). Butler (1991) suggested that it is the complexity of trust that has led many academics to refer to it as a multi-dimensional concept, and Dietz & Den Hartog (2006) acknowledged that difficulties within the literature arises from a general dissatisfaction with the existing set of measures.

There are a plethora methods through which trust can be assessed and measured. Broadly speaking, the behavioural approach toward trust relied on observable behaviours: primarily choices made by an individual in an interpersonal context that gradually accumulate over time (Lewicki, Tomlinsion, & Gillespie, 2006). This process occurs due to patterns of cooperation, and/or the proportion of choices that reflecting a cooperative capacity. Fluctuations in cooperation could potentially indicate changes in the level of trust, which made it difficult to pinpoint the behaviour of trusting from other interpersonal factors (ibid. 2006)

Recent psychological understandings of trust have focused predominately on cognitive and affective process, which aim to discover the underlying causes of the trusting action: beliefs, expectations, and affect. This approach diversified over time,

examining these processes in different contexts and hierarchies, as well as from varied individual standpoints. Within the field of trust research, there too was debate regarding the base-level of trust, which included concepts that ranged from “zero-trust, an initial positive baseline, and an initial distrust baseline” (Lewicki et al., 2006).

To further complicate the field of research, distinctions have been made between trust models and how they view the concepts of trust and distrust in relation to one another. Unidimensional models emphasised trust and distrust as polar opposites, whereas two-dimensional models argued that trust and distrust are different constructs entirely. In addition, transformational models stipulated that different types of trust occurred (deterrence-based, knowledge-based, and identification-based trust), which transform over time and number of interactions (Lewicki et al., 2006).

As a result of the variety of disciplines and models of trust, there is an expansive database of literature and study surrounding trust. However, one seminal work is still commonly utilised in conceptualisations of trust. In an attempt to clarify the relationship between trustworthiness and trust, the model proposed by Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995) focused on two parties: a trustor (the party trusting) and trustee (the party to be trusted). This conceptualisation was unique as it separated trust from its antecedents and outcomes, in which characteristics of the individual were considered influential antecedents that affected trust. Mayer et al. (1995) began by suggesting a clear distinction between trustworthiness as a quality of a trustee, whereas trust was as an act of the trustor. Furthermore, the trustor had an inherent propensity for trust, a “willingness to trust other”, which is based on previous data of a particular party. Nonetheless, if an individual was considered to be trustworthy, it did not automatically result in another person trusting based on that quality alone, even if it was assumed to be a strong predictor – rather it acted as “a foundation for the development of trust.” (Mayer et al., 1995)

Contrary to previous that preceded it, it also suggested that trust relied on the willingness to take a risk and engage in a trusting action (being vulnerable), rather than trust itself as taking a risk. It was specifically this action, a “willingness to render oneself vulnerable”, that was a core component of trust. By accepting vulnerability, the trustor acknowledges the risk of the actions of the trustee, and in turn, conceded that the likelihood of detrimental effects was unlikely.

As a basis for trust, there were three factors of trustworthiness identified: perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity. Perceived ability referred to the perception that a trustee had sufficient skills, competencies, and characteristics for the domain of interest. Benevolence referred to the perception that there was an attachment between the two parties, and that the trustee would act in the interests of the trustor, that they would want to do good to the trustor. Integrity referred to the trustor's perception that the trustee adhered to a set of ethical principles – specifically a set that “the trustor finds acceptable,” that are not egocentrically motivated.

The model presented by Mayer et al. (1995) also aimed explain trust prior to the development of a relationship between two parties (propensity to trust). As noted in Lewicki et al., (2006), the model also included an ability to link the outcomes of trusting behaviour to the factors of trustworthiness, which provided a feedback loop that facilitated changes in trust over time.

The following definition of trust, which will subsequently be used for this research, was developed:

*“The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712).”*

Mayer et al.'s (1995) model of trust has faced numerous testing under various domains, with questions regarding its ability to take in to account propensity to trust in diverse contexts and adequately operationalise the measure of trust. Nonetheless, the definition remains one of the most utilised definitions of trust, and serves as a basis for a majority of the trust literature, which will be further explored in the workplace domain of trust.

## 1.2 Workplace and organisational trust

Organisations have come to increasingly rely on collaborative processes that emphasise coordination in the workplace, which includes shared responsibility and greater attention to workers' input in the decision-making process (Costa, Roe, & Taillieu, 2001). This emphasis has placed increasing pressure on inter-group dynamics, of which one of the essential components is trust (Costa et al., 2001). Spector & Jones (2004) suggest that personal trust can affect cooperation, communication and ability to perform in organisations. Thus, a clear understanding of trust and its causes can result in cohesion between people beyond interpersonal similarities is important for workplaces.

Understanding the role of trust and its relation to performance and effectiveness of different individuals has become increasingly important in the field of workplace trust. Workplace trust extends its boundaries beyond interpersonal trust: it relies on interdependence to achieve both personal and organisational goals within different tiers of workplace hierarchy (Mayer et al., 1995). Andersen & Kovač (2012) noted that with increasing hierarchical distance, trust in managers from subordinates can decline. As trust in superiors can provide benefits for an organisation at an individual and team level, gauging the correct distance is important. Furthermore, Konst, Vonk, & Van Der Vlist (1999) found that a leader's behaviour was more likely to be observed and given causal attributions, both positive and negative. The results suggest that different positions can influence evaluations of an individual, especially as a leader's behaviour affects a greater number of individuals. Brown, Gray, McHardy, & Taylor (2015) established a link between employee trust and firm performance, in which the level of trust was based upon the average level of trust of managers.

This points to an increasingly important connection between employees and employers on the basis of trust, its antecedents, and the resultant action on the overall level of trust. Varied empirical and theoretical contributions to the field of workplace trust have examined these sentiments. They will now be examined and juxtaposed, in order to find contradictions and useful points of reference for this study.

Costa et al.'s (2001) team trust questionnaire ( $N = 395$ ) confirmed that the



concept of trust was comprised of many factors, supporting the characterisation of trust in earlier studies (e.g Mayer et al, 1995). They reported a distinction between propensity to trust, trustworthiness, and behaviours of trust, with trust largely being explained by perceived trustworthiness, and secondly, cooperative behaviours. Perceived trustworthiness refers to the three aforementioned qualities in Mayer et al. (1995), which found support for the model.

To further examine the important of trust in workplace relations, Tan & Tan (2000) suggested that experience of trust within an organisation is highly dependent on the individual experience, attempting to delineate between trust in the organisation and trust in the supervisor. Tan & Tan (2000) utilised the factors of trustworthiness in Mayer et al. (1995) and applied them in the opposite direction for their hypotheses: that trust in supervisor was positively correlated with ability, benevolence, and integrity of the supervisor. Data was collected via field questionnaires ( $N = 230$ ), which found that all factors had significant and positive correlations with trust in the supervisor. These factors accounted for 49% of variation of trust in supervisor,  $F(3, 209) = 178.57, p < .001$ . Furthermore, perceived organizational support was a significant predictor of trust in supervisor. The findings confirmed that the qualities of a leader are important in trust from subordinates, as well as perception of the organisation. Although the factors accounted for approximately half of the variance, it is important to further consider the specific impact of each item on trust, as well as the remainder of the variance. Continuing on from this research, Colquitt et al. (2007) also suggested that integrity is an important antecedent of trust in a supervisor.

Dietz & Den Hartog (2006) reviewed intra-organisational trust, analysing 14 existing measures against the theory and conceptualisation in management literature. They found that trust levels vary at different organisational levels (who is participating in the relationship), and is also influenced by differing situations that exhibit trust. Furthermore, they suggested that 'competence' was not a widely-utilised measure, which challenges the frequent citing of 'perceived ability' as a factor of trust relationships. Therefore, an extra attribute for the trustee was proposed – in addition to ability, benevolence, and integrity, predictability (consistency and regularity of behaviour) was suggested.

However, as supervisors are reliant on subordinates to complete tasks, technical competence has often been assumed as a large factor in a supervisor's assessment of a

subordinate's performance (Gill and Knoll, 2011). Following on from Colquitt et al. (2007), Gill and Knoll (2011) assessed the importance of ability, benevolence, and integrity in predicting trust variance across different referent types. The study consisted of a 20-minute survey ( $N = 187$ ) completed by Canadian human-resource professionals that sought to assess the generalisability of the integrative model of organisational trust (Mayer et al., 1995) amongst peers, supervisors, and subordinates. Additionally, it assessed the relative importance of ability, benevolence, and integrity in varied (lateral, upward, and downward) trust judgements. The three components of trustworthiness were related to trust in peer, trust in supervisor, and trust in subordinate. Of importance was the finding that trust in supervisor was positively related to trust in peers, in which it was suggested that the trust in a supervisor could indicate the condition of trust in the organisation as a whole. Similarly, trust in supervisor was related to job satisfaction. Benevolence and integrity were of importance of trust in a supervisor, whereas ability was the main quality for trust in subordinates.

Yet, the study was limited to suggesting causality due to its design (cross-sectional), as well as the concentration of the study within two workforces. Regardless, acknowledgement of differing relationship between trust in the workplace, as well as the organisation as a whole, elaborated the indicators of trust from Mayer et al. (1995). The finding that trusting of peers could relate to trust in the supervisor, and the trust atmosphere as a whole is an important finding, and one that will be considered further in this study. Furthermore, differentiating the trustworthiness factors depending on position is another finding that aimed to clarify the pre-existing model.

Prior to Gill & Knoll (2001), there was an earlier study that wished to examine the changes to the factors of trustworthiness depending on context. According to Lapidot et al., (2007) the role of antecedents in trust were different toward a supervisor in an institution which had selected a person for their ability and behaviours and in particular, integrity. A demonstration of ability and integrity may not elicit high levels of trust in a leader when compared to a subordinate / superior relationship, as the behaviour was deemed to be a 'basic requirement' of leadership. However, actions which jeopardised ability (for example, incompetence) or integrity (breaking agreements) were more likely to rapidly affect the level of trust, indicating a significant pressure of leadership responsibility.

Lapidot, Kark, & Shamir (2007) tested Mayer et al. (1995) theory of trust to

define the most salient components of leader behaviour that contribute to trust building and trust erosion. A questionnaire given to cadets and team commanders in the Israeli Defence Force ( $N = 736$ ) asked them to describe an event (one page per incident) that strengthened trust in their commander, and an event that destroyed trust. Finally, participants marked if they had given a trust-building or eroding event, or both. There was a significant difference between the occurrence of positive (trust-building) and negative (trust-eroding) incidents, suggesting that erosion of trust was easier to recount and reported more often when compared to trust-building incidents. Benevolence was the most salient quality mentioned in trust-building incidents (42.6%), whereas the most salient behaviour in trust erosion were related to integrity (37.9%), ability (20.8%) and distance / lack of support (20.5%).

Support was found for Mayer et al.'s (1995) characterisation of perceived trustworthiness (integrity, benevolence, and ability) of an individual. It was also suggested that openness was a reflection of integrity, and displayed an ability to reduce distance with subordinates, which in turn suggests that openness as a trait is particularly important for work in a bureaucratic setting. It displayed a difference in salience between Mayer et al. (1995) three behaviours depending on contextual factors (i.e. in the military) and the individual, offering a perception of which qualities were particularly important of a leader, and how easily they could be affected.

Although the majority of these studies are from the quantitative side of research, trust is a concept that can be difficult or contentious to quantify. This presents a chance to perform a qualitative study that considers the aforementioned additions to Mayer et al.'s (1995) model through a different methodology. As stated in Pirttilä-Backman, Menard, Verma, & Kassea (2017), to understand trust is best achieved through regarding it as a social construction. Specifically, this study will examine the aforementioned constructions of trust at a managerial level in the education sector in Finland. As trust can be conceptualised as process that is continually negotiated and discussed, social representations will be considered as a complimentary theory to the primary methodology of grounded theory.

### 1.3 Social Representations

Social representations can be conceptualised as shared knowledge borne from an interaction, whereby people are confronted by something that is new, unfamiliar, or socially salient (Pirttilä-Backman et al., 2017). Social representations represent a shared social knowledge that enable people to conceptualise the environment around them: an everyday laypersons symbolic world (Collavin, 2007; Taylor, Murray & Lamont, 2017). For this study, Moscovici's definition will be utilised:

*“Social representations are a system of values, ideas, and practices with a twofold function; first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and master it; secondly, to enable communication to take place amongst members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history.”* (Moscovici, 1973, p. xiii).

Social representations theory aims to address the coexistence of differing meanings & versions of the same phenomenon and encounters. Furthermore, it examines the ramifications of using or challenging different versions, including how is the uncertainty of that knowledge managed (Howarth, 2006). Social representations have the ability to both influence and constitute social practices (ibid., 2006).

Two of the primary processes of social representations are anchoring and objectification. Anchoring is the process of categorising an unfamiliar phenomenon by comparing it to something that is already known, whereas objectification further locates the unfamiliar process through symbols, icons, and images, creating a concrete conceptualisation of new interactions (Pirttilä-Backman et al., 2017). Additionally, themata define oppositions in everyday thinking and language that are contained in collective memory and have become thematised. Themata are built upon the binary of a concept (e.g. clean/dirty, moral/immoral) and are highly dependent on the context of their construction. Polarisation of thought becomes thematised when the binary is

expressed through a social position and as these classifications are negotiated or re-contextualised, the meaning of such polarities can fluctuate (Markovà, 2000; Pirttilä-Backman et al., 2017). Social representations are found across communication, its discourses, and within the minds of the individual – shaped at a personal, interpersonal, and collective level (Jodelet, 1991). They can mediate an individual or group's response to a given stimulus, and similarly, they can provide a framework in which social members can discuss the matter (Collavin, 2007). Consequently, representations are networked and anchored to an individual, their values, social class, and ultimately, to a specific position in relation to a social actor in regard to any given issue (Collavin, 2007). These constructed networks of classifications and meanings that are capable of constructing a prism, through which individuals can make sense of their surroundings and world (Jodelet, 1991), Similarly, Collavin (2007) conceptualises this as a vantage point. Social representations observe talk and action related to a social phenomenon: rather than an inherent characteristic of the item or action, meaning is found through the way that people relate to it (Wagner et al., 1999).

The process of social representations transforms a concept in to a principle: affecting the way each imagine and piece of information is interpreted. In turn, this principle is then utilised in future assessments of information. Therefore, the representation itself is compounded in to a firmer ideology, which is in continual reformulation and refinement during the process (Collavin, 2007). The socially-shared ideologies are reformulated and contested throughout the process.

Qualitative methods are a suitable theoretical basis from which to study trust, as they are formed through interaction. Within the education context, there is a concentrated and consistent renegotiation of the values surrounding trust, their value and their function. Specifically, social interactions are important when considering the role of management in the education sector – particularly the everyday issues that constitute the bulk of the work. Social representations presents the ability to ask questions around locally embedded meanings of specific terminology, and to examine sociocultural phenomena (Pirttilä-Backman et al., 2017). It provides an ability to examine how trust is socially represented in relation to the socio-cultural context in which they are produced. Although trust research has succeeded in identifying components of trust, it has encountered difficulty in reliability measuring the concept. Therefore, applying the qualitative theories of social representation is important for this

specific study of workplace trust. With this emphasis on research in trust, the cultural differences of trust will be discussed in the following section.

#### **1.4 Trust in cultural contexts**

The conception of trust can be difficult to support across cultural divides. Wasti, Tan, Brower, & Önder (2007) suggested that different contexts have varied leadership styles. Although Wasti et al., (2007) concede that it is somewhat reflected in Mayer et al. (1995) model, it can nonetheless impact relationships with subordinates depending on the country's values in leadership, as well as challenge the ability for traditional models of trust to assess the effects cross-culturally. Correspondingly, Bürger Lukeš, and Šindelárová (2007) remark that if components of trustworthiness are reported to measure similarly across cultures, there can be a difference in definition and usage.

Culture can affect how concepts of trust are measured. Differences can be found in propensity to trust, operationalisation of concepts, and even reflect different power-distances: any given culture's emphasis on adherence to authoritarian norms and acceptance of authority. Wasti et al. (2007) found support for the integrity measure in their cross-cultural study of trust measures spanning Turkey, Singapore, and the U.S, but noted that measurement ability and benevolence was not replicable in a similar way, prompting a clearer distinction between task and contextual performance to aid cross-cultural operationalisation when assessing subordinate/superior relationships.

The differences between collectivist and individualist have also been acknowledged in the measurement of trust. Huff & Kelley (2003) examined organisational trust in collectivist (Taiwan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and Hong Kong) and individualist countries (Hawaii and Illinois) at both an individual and organisational level in the banking industry. Participants ( $N = 1282$ ) from collectivist cultures had a stronger in-group bias, which in turn led to lower propensity to trust individuals and external organisations. Furthermore, organisations from collectivist countries reported significantly higher in-group bias when compared to the individualist countries. Propensity to distrust was higher in all collectivist countries, and trust within organisations was lower in collectivist countries, but only significantly higher in Illinois.

Other fields of research that are closely related to trust have also examined cross-cultural differences. Martin et al., (2013) compared the meaning of leader integrity (honesty and consistency between values and behaviour) across six nations: Ireland, U.S, Germany, Austria, China, and Hong Kong, with the hope of challenging ‘anglocentric dominance’ in literature. Managers ( $N=189$ ) responded to an open-ended online questionnaire that asked participants to define concepts. There were similarities in behaviours and attributes that conveyed integrity, though the weight given to each item varied. Furthermore, it was found that the conceptualisation of behaviours and attributes within to a specific area differed depending on the culture.

These studies depict the obstacles in regard to the cross-cultural measurement of trust and the definition of its related concepts, often relating to specific cultural influences. This can affect the ability to effectively operationalise trust, its components, and to find a consistent definition of key variables from which to make wide-ranging comparisons.

## **1.5 Trust in a Finnish Context**

Historical events and major nation building projects, in conjunction with the influences of the Lutheran church, play a major role in the perceptions of equality in Finland (Menard, 2017). The Finnish nationalist movement promoted the idea of equality through the general level of education and enabling its access. In turn, the education system was largely implicit in the equality focus, teaching multiple languages, educating women and targeting the rural population to create an even base-level of education (ibid., 2017). Due to the position of universal and equal access to education, a part of this rhetoric is emphasised through ‘sameness’. The concept of sameness can in turn lead to a negative evaluation of differences in social and cultural practices if they counter the dominant perceptions (ibid., 2017). This is particularly relevant for conceptions of trust.

In Pirttilä-Backman et al.'s (2017) study of teacher and principal conceptions of workplace trust Finnish schools, it was found that the dominant perception of trust

considered “negotiating and fulfilling agreements” to be of primary concern, which in turn led to conformity in the workplace. The idea of ‘contract’ was key to the functioning of the workplace.

## **1.6 Study proposal**

The current study is presented in an effort to provide further contextual definitions of trust and leadership, as well as the various manifestations of culture that can result from their analysis. The majority of the presented quantitative studies encountered difficulties in the measurement of trust, which led to the selection of qualitative methodology for this work. Although the qualities of leadership and the superior/subordinate relationship have been considered in the literature, there have been issues surrounding its applicability to various cultural contexts, especially in the aspect of operationalising trust.

A superior’s effective leadership and the benefits it can bring to a workplace, as well as an individual, has been highlighted. However, the robustness of the Mayer et al. (1995) model of trust has been challenged over the definition of trust, as well as the factors of trustworthiness. Of particular variance has been the contact between superior and subordinate, in which the salience or definition of trust and its components has changed depending on the context in which it occurred. The relationship between superior and subordinate requires further exploration, as studies cite different variables as keys in the communication process. A qualitative presentation of the multitude of factors is important for developing the tenets of trust within workplace trust.

The importance of cohesion and collaborative processes in the workplace place an onus on examining trust in differing contexts. Further understanding the pressures and complexities that are placed on individuals in positions of leadership in regard to trust is useful for improving future relations, especially in regard to the priority areas that are often cited.

Grounded theory, which will be further discussed in the method section, was an important selection to review the interview data, as it enabled a very close assessment of the relations of trust in a particular workplace: Finnish education. Through this method, the interview data revealed the complexities and contradictions of the trust, explicitly from a managerial perspective. This study is hoped to serve as an addition to the



previous study that utilised the same data (Pirttilä-Backman et al., 2017), but examined both directions of the superior / subordinate relationship. With increased emphasis on the perspective from a superior's perspective, it is hoped that some issues in the literature can be contributed to.

Therefore, the current study, has two aims: how is trust in the Finnish education system from a managerial perspective conceptualised, and how the conceptualisation of trust relates to the representation of professionalism in the Finnish education system.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants and Methods of Data Collection

The data was collected in 2009 through individual, semi-structured interviews focusing on trust. The participants ( $N=6$ ), of which three were male and three females ( $M$  age = 50,  $SD = 9.70$ ), were all principals of public schools in Helsinki metropolitan area (approximately one million total inhabitants living in the area). The selection of schools in the study aimed to create a diverse that reflected variation through different intra-city locations. Public schools were selected as they are more representative: there is an extremely limited amount of private schools in Finland. The interviews were conducted by a University of Helsinki research assistant in Finnish. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed and translated simultaneously. The interviews were conducted in each principal's respective office. The average length of the interview was eighty-eight minutes and the Finnish word used for trust was 'luottamus'.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of six parts. Trust was the broad focus of interviews, which began with open and broad stimulus questions (e.g. 'What is trust between teachers based on?'). The interviews progressed towards specific discussion points, such as 'How is trust evident between teachers and the principal?' and 'Can teachers or principals pretend that they trust someone even if they really don't?'. The questions were partly theory driven yet retained an open format in order to encourage a variety of responses and ideas.

Following questions surrounding trust, the topics of distrust and losing trust were also discussed. The definitions of both trust and mistrust were important in conceptualising definitions of trust, as participants were required to draw boundaries between the two concepts. Through the establishment of these boundaries, the meanings and value of trust could be better ascertained. Although these concepts are not simply dichotomous in nature, the process of social representations in trust entangles the two

concepts, and thus they come to rely on each other for their meanings (Pirttilä-Backman, Menard, Verma et al., 2017).

## **2.2 Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory was selected as the method of analysis. It was developed by Barney Glaser & Anselm Strauss in 1967 as a reaction to the increasing prevalence of qualitative and often positivist methods within the discipline of sociology. The aim of the theory is to ultimately generate inductive theories from qualitative data. Qualitative research faced difficulty in meeting the standards of validity, reliability, and implication that was obtained from the increasingly popular and stringent quantitative field of research (Charmaz, 2014). Glaser and Strauss (1967) attempted to challenge their perception of the increasing separation between research and theory, as well as counter the predominate view that qualitative methodology was a less rigorous methodology . Grounded theory was an attempt to provide a defined qualitative framework that could in itself generate theory and disseminate that to a wider audience than quantitative research

Grounded theory was built on implicit analytic strategies that were often solely oral traditions, with the hope of providing written guidelines for qualitative research that encompassed systematic techniques of inquiry and analysis. Data is analysed through an inductive, emergent, and open-ended iterative approach. Of primary importance to grounded theory is deriving theory from the data, without placing any preconceived notions on the data. Grounded theory is primarily focused on reflexivity and constant-comparative methods, which are continually revisited and reassessed. One of the main goals of the theory is to provide a bridge for aspects of the human experience that may be constrained by qualitative methodology, with a focus on development, maintenance, and change of interpersonal relations . Throughout the research process, grounded theory encourages the researcher to remain close to the data, continually refining and reengaging with the content. These comparative methods foster continual challenge and reassessment of the content and analysis, thus remaining ‘grounded’. Constant comparisons, in conjunction with further field research directs the work towards the final goal: theoretical saturation.

### **2.3 Constructivist grounded theory**

Analysis of the material was conducted utilising Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory framework, which is a modification of the theory proposed by Glaser & Strauss. Similarly, it attempts to connect theory and research practice through a method of fusing analysis closely to individual's lives, abductive reasoning (Charmaz, 2017). Comparative methods are utilised throughout the analysis. However, constructivist grounded theory places an increased emphasis on the processes within the text, and a closer attention to analytic language. It shifts the epistemological foundations of the theory. Whereas grounded theory offers a pragmatist way to conceptualise critical qualitative inquiry, constructivist grounded theory provides a vehicle for actioning it. It is constructed and actively engaged, which is suitable for combination with social representations.

### **2.4 Interview Analysis**

Analysis began with reading the transcripts through multiple times. Following this step, the phases of coding and analysis adhered to the tenets of constructivist grounded theory, and was facilitated and supported by Atlas.ti - a qualitative computer-assisted data analysis program. Codes were initially created and refined on the basis of what became evident and pronounced in the data. Abductive reasoning was utilised in this process, which encouraged formulation of theory based on the data presented. Initial codes provided a starting point for analysis through data fragments, which provided "nascent theoretical categories" and enabled clustering of data and further refinement (Charmaz, 2017). Through these initial codes, it provided a 'comb' to go back through the codes again before any categories could be defined. These theoretical considerations were continuously compared to the emerging theories and interpretations from the data and research of literature. At the same time, the data was returned to in order to align interpretations as closely as possible to the actual data. This constant comparative method compares data with data, data with codes, and codes with categories (Charmaz, 2017). This grounding of conceptions of theory within the data led to a further refinement of codes (focused coding), memo writing, and finally theoretical

sampling and saturation. Due to the small sample size, this study will not include identification of code on grounds of retaining anonymity among participants. The small sample size and detailed focus render it likely that each participant receives an even representation.

The codes that were selected were chosen to conceptualise the relationships of trust established between the principal and teachers within the workplace. The codes reflect recurring themes related to trust and its processes in the Finnish school context. Four thematic codes were selected to structure the results section. Included within the themes are prevalent codes under the main thematic codes, with the hope to further explicate the relationships between concepts and behaviour. The interview questions are provided in Appendix. 1

### **3. Results**

The aim of this study was two-fold: to examine the social representations of trust from a managerial perspective in the Finnish education system, and to consider the relationship between the concept of professionalism and trust within the same context. Initially, the results will be presented using Charmaz's (2006) model of constructivist grounded theory. The discussion section will then combine the analysis with social representations theory.

The results of this study focused on four distinct thematic areas: building trust through open communication, agreeing on procedures, professionalism before emotion, and working for common goals and a higher purpose. Within each area, there were overlapping themes and codes that were often interrelated and difficult to separate. This is in-line with previous research on the concept of trust, which regularly acknowledges the multitude of definitions that can occur when attempting to explain, operationalise, and measure trust. Nonetheless, each major category present in this study is considered, as well as the sub-domains that were recurrent throughout the analysis. Their definitions and the situations in which they occur are discussed and explained in the following results

#### **3.1 Building trust through open communication**

*"We have trust among us as long as we dare to talk about things."*

Open communication occurs when staff members speak directly about any problems or issues they are facing, regardless of the relation to hierarchy, impact of the communication, or outcome of the contact. It is experienced as freeing oneself from inhibitions in addressing others in the workplace, whether it be a superior or colleague. The content of the communication can include personal and professional ideas. The terminology can also refer to the participatory nature of the workplace, whereby an individual's opinions and ideas are heard and considered, independent of their role. The only criteria for this interaction is that they are a member of the team. In this manner, each individual is granted a certain agency: one with which they contribute to the

direction of their workplace. In turn, trust can be established and built upon: *“Trust can be improved by being open.”*

Within the concept of open communication, there are specific demands in how it is achieved. It is expected that individuals act within their professional bounds and behave in a respectful manner while expressing themselves. Open communication is not simply a process in which the liberty to say anything in the workplace is granted. Rather, it is a mechanism by which people can define their boundaries, expectations, and thoughts regarding important issues in the workplace. It is critical how matters are discussed and can consequently shape further discussions:

*“It’s always good to give positive feedback and you could formulate your negative feedback into suggestions, it’s about how you bring things up. There’s many ways in which you can present development ideas, so people won’t feel, they won’t feel you’re throwing it in their face.”*

Through this tenet of the workplace, it is idealised that there are no secrets or surprises, which acts as a bridge communication for further communications - people know exactly what is required of them and what each other person is capable of in their role within the workplace. Therefore, trust is built as people understand one another better, individual perceptions, and the shared goals and values that motivate the group to achieve their objectives. Through this openness, trust is built as the group identifies with values, goals, and methodology to achieve them as a unit. This is evident in both the presence and absence of open communication: *“When there is trust, people are up front and communicative. That of openness increases trust and if there is no trust then, well somehow, the open feeling is diminished on all sides of course.”*

Trust is not always built intentionally. Rather, it can be serendipitous by-product of other actions. Communicating in this direct manner can be difficult if there are workplace tensions or clashes of personality. However, it is generally expected, especially by the principal themselves, that staff-members do their best to be as open as possible. From a managerial perspective, it can be difficult to understand the needs, misgivings, and personal qualities of staff if they are unable to communicate them

openly. This expectation is also apparent when mistakes are made, in that open communication requires both positive and negative information to be shared.

*"I have always said that one makes mistakes and if mistakes happen it is better that I hear about them from that teacher themselves than from someone else and if one makes mistakes it is no use to lie."*

Within the overarching major category of building trust through open communication, several code groups provided additional contextualisation of processes within open communication. These additional code groups reflect the most prevalent and recurring codes that were established during the coding process, which explicate the interplay between the encompassing major conceptual code, and the codes that fall within it. The following section will therefore comprise of codes which fall under the conceptual code, and further contextualise the information stored within it. This process will be repeated for each major category.

### **3.1.2 Time together and interaction develops level of trust**

Time spent time working together most often occurs within the workplace (i.e. during lunch breaks or working on shared projects), and can also be related to socialising outside of the working environment. Spending time together refers to mutual interaction/s with another staff member, with a long-term result of gaining familiarity with others.

When asked what generates trust between teachers and the principal, it is quickly answered: *"Interaction is the most important thing"* when building trust. Importantly, the conception includes *"— not only sharing information, but all the interactions."* The value of interactions is important from a managerial perspective, which is evident in many of the interviewee's desire to 'be present' – *"It means that I leave my office and go to the classrooms, to the teachers' room, to events and participate. To do also other things than just the administrative paperwork in my office."* Time together is also reflected in the way that the staff as a whole work together.

*"You can easily see that people who have been working together for twenty years and people who have been working together for a very short time, as teachers of parallel classes for example and they don't know each other very*



*well, there's little interaction between them and if they have only little co-operation between them, it shows."*

The cooperation between staff is reliant on open communication, as well as getting to know each other through time together– the two concepts appear to be dependent on each other. Without open communication, it is difficult to develop necessary working relationships in order to become more familiar with colleagues. This relates to being able to understand your co-worker's abilities and beliefs, *"Actually get to learn each other's methods and thoughts...being together and investing in work welfare, more of that, so we'll get to know each other and I think that will increase trust,"* as well as dispelling any misinformation or personal judgements that can occur from not knowing an individual.

*"I seem to come back to that all the time, I think knowing each other is very important, people [with emphasis] think they know things, when that's not based on facts it generates mistrust more easily than when people are aware of the facts."*

However, creating opportunities to spend time-together can be difficult, especially outside of work. From a principal's perspective, it appears that there is more value placed on time spent outside of work.

*"When you interact with each other in your free time, well not in your free time but for example, you go somewhere outside the school environment and spend the night, so you don't get to go home, you spend time within the work community and get to know your colleagues, and that's something to spend like two days with your co-workers, you get to know them well and then you might find ways to do shared projects easier."*

A contextual focus becomes apparent – spending time together in the workplace is not necessarily the same as spending time outside of work in the same people's company. This too is a distinction that was often cited by principals, and perhaps one that indicates the strength of the bonds between staff. The ability to spend time together

outside of the work context is also somewhat reliant on an individual to engage outside of the parameters of work – in turn, it requires an increased degree of openness.

The amount of time spent together is highly dependent on the individual in question, as other interviewees suggested that showing too much interest in individuals creates a certain risk of blurring the boundaries of professionalism. When speaking purely from a principal's point of view, the value of spending time together is less clearly-defined, or rather, fraught with more potential consequences. *"The manager should not be a friend and the teacher shouldn't be the pupil's friend, that's how it goes."* Throughout analysis of the text, this distinction came up numerous times – often a professional barrier that interviewees stated was crossed if you spent time with colleagues outside of school.

However, other interviewees were instead more careful to limit discussion topics whilst at work, rather than limit spending time together as the overall value of team-interaction was worth any associated costs. *"The more we do things together and face things together the better they'll know what I'm thinking and how I do things and they'll build up their image of me."* This concept will be further discussed in the third thematic area, 'professionalism prioritised over emotion'.

Within the desire to spend time together was the notion of 'being present' as a leader. The importance of this action from a principal's perspective largely concerns attendance and listening.

*"A principal who is not present, if one is a so called administrative principal, who stays in the office and is not involved in the everyday life of pupils and the teachers room and is not present, then the risk of misunderstandings increases."*

Through this communication, it was visible that the principal gave importance to 'interaction with others' primarily as a stabilising factor in the development of trust between the managerial and staff tiers, and to prevent the consequences of lack of communication, which can ultimately lead to misunderstandings.

Active construction of trust is also evident the need to be proactive in regard to staff feedback. Having open discussions relating to professional performance each year was a commonly cited goal of multiple principals. *"I try to build it; I arrange performance appraisal discussions every year."* In this sense, the 'it' is trust - the manager is interested in the individual enough to take time for feedback, which signifies a mutual interest in development of trust by maintaining open communication channels regarding professional matters.

Time together also encapsulates the process of overcoming problems as a team.

*"Well, I think it [trust] is developed during this school year, but now in hindsight it's easy to say it might have been easier if we'd had time to really concentrate on being together, so our trust has maybe developed through shared problems, when there has been disagreement on some issue and we have dealt with it as a group or individually with the teachers so we have then agreed on something and trust has developed that way."*

This interaction is focused on having the time to meet as a whole, and discuss both positive and negative challenges that influence the team, and therefore, potentially influence the level of trust. If a negative issue is raised, trust can be forged through overcoming the cited problem/s as a team, or at the least, addressing them through communication.

### **3.1.3 Communication prevents misunderstandings**

Communication can facilitate a better understanding of other colleagues, which can provide clarity in working situations, especially in regard to the abilities and beliefs of an individual. The necessity of this community is evident regarding any perceived challenges. *"If someone has a different opinion about something, he can come and tell me but to talk behind someone's back, we can't do that."* There is often an identified 'cost' of misunderstandings that can manifest from lack of open communication – segregation of the group or an overall loss of trust in individuals and/or the team.

Conversely, communication can potentially resolve issues and prevent further damage to the team. *"If there are conflict situations, they should be discussed quickly and clearly and in the way that the both sides are present."* This openness and neutrality is important for moving forward from a principal's perspective, whereby leadership is required in order to negotiate potential resolutions and mitigate any loss of trust that results from the confrontation.

Open communication can also prevent any misunderstandings when hiring new staff. For example, a teacher that had been fired in a previous workplace was hired when the reasons for the dismissal were discussed and worked through. *"I have hired a teacher who was fired from his previous school. Why he was fired and what was the whole process, it was discussed openly in the interview. I hired him and I got a fine teacher."* The discussion prior to entering the school established a base level of trust, while avoiding any 'surprises' at a later stage.

Communication is the one of the tools that is utilised to effectively understand the context of any given situation. *"A comprehensive idea of the situation can be had only by discussions among teachers and it requires trust that teachers can discuss it without having to fear it will come back to bite you later."* This is also an important part of the principal's commitment to respecting his subordinates and maintaining trust through clear and open communication. *"You need to have an explanation - if you have to make difficult decisions, you have to always give a reason. If you don't give any reason for doing something I'm sure that'll decrease trust."* Providing information helps to counter any misunderstanding toward actions, and includes other staff in the process. The provision of information appears somewhat related to open communication and the formation of trust, as well as its maintenance. *"Yes, I'd like it [trust] to be higher so that people could really get to know me and my methods and motivations behind my decision-making processes and increase mutual trust in that way."*

Principals are responsible for being proactive when it comes to communicating with and informing their employee's. *"If you don't give out information, giving out information is also something that if that's not working properly, I think people will distrust."* Furthermore, it is important for the principal to convey a level of trust through open communication that suggests they have a strong working relationship with their

teachers. *"It would be hard to imagine that a school would function on the basis that the principal doesn't trust the teachers."*

Communication is expected and wished for in order to better manage the workforce effectively.

*"If they have a problem with something, we'll talk about it ... and especially between a manager and an employee, you can tell [laughing], you have to trust in these up-front conversations, that they'll tell you what they [laughing] think."*

Moreover, if there is a serious situation with another staff-member's, it is best addressed openly.

*"My solution usually is that we have to give this information out and talk about it and then we agree on procedure, when are we going to give it out and how his career will be now on, will he work as much as he is able to or will he stay away from work, these kinds of procedures because I feel that they make situation easier...also for the ill person because we don't have to cover it up."*

The direct nature of addressing these problems avoids speculation about the individual or the process. Furthermore, the response is first discussed between the principal and the individual, whereby both parties understand the next action that will be taken, which in turn can facilitate trust.

#### **3.1.4 Distrust due to reduced communication**

This code was selected to juxtapose with open communication. Foremost, reduced communication is perceived as a concern – the default operation of the educational context relies on communication and a standard of openness through which it functions. There is a preconceived notion that there should be nothing to hide from colleagues, and that if there a deficiency of information (communication), that questions may need to be asked. *"If he just keeps to himself there we may assume that trust is somehow damaged."*

An absence of communication and distrust can foster each other - through the lack of contact, people do not get an opportunity to raise concerns.

*“The atmosphere wouldn’t be so open and communicative - I mean and some things would never come up and its possible people would, people might talk behind your back, you know when there is trust people are up front and communicative.”*

Seemingly, the reduction of communication can contribute to concerns of speaking badly about others, which was uniformly considered to be a negative outcome in the workplace – *“There has been something going on which I have called “the policy of badmouthing”. It is about hurting others without seeing that there is also something good in him.”*

### **3.1.5 Trust necessary for teamwork**

An indicator of trust is visible in staff members’ actions and interactions within the workplace, which can manifest in their ability to work together. This is an often-repeated demand of the education workplace. *“That time is over when teachers worked alone in their own little nests. Rather, communication and openness are necessary for understanding others and their positions.”* This is also a key for the principal in explaining decisions, whereby it is a process of sharing information to create a uniform base of knowledge and understanding. *“Well, it [trust] can be made visible by the principal sharing as much information as possible with teachers so that they know what’s going on at the school, having a communicative environment.”* This can act as a display of trust, which in turn, provides an atmosphere for teamwork. The shared level of trust and consequent teamwork is also of importance for the education sector’s framework. *“If teachers can’t trust each other, there will be no uniform general idea in the subject teacher system.”* From a principal’s perspective, it is also important that the trust is reciprocated. Although trust can exist unilaterally, it is shared sense of trust that enables effective teamwork in the school environment, as well as from a managerial to subordinate relationship. *“If I trust them but they don’t trust me at all ... it would turn*

*things upside down."* Correspondingly, the principal acknowledges that this may need to be initiated from the leadership level. *"It certainly creates trust if it is noticed that the principal trusts the teachers."*

### **3.1.6 Shared working spaces**

When asked about the level of trust, respondents suggested that it is often evident in the way that people communicate in the staff-room.

*"The teachers room is a place where teachers can unburden their heart when they have difficult situations, and it means that teachers trust what they might say when they are angry is not used against them later, everyone understands the context of it."*

A conducive working space, and one that is a safe and open domain, can in turn open communications. However, it must be contextualised within the space; that it is indeed a place for sharing information, but it is an enclosed space that is subject to procedural rules (which will be discussed in the second thematic area). Therefore, the information stays within the context in which it is delivered. *"Solving the conflicts is one thing that trust is built on. And everyone can trust in that if we talk about something behind closed doors it remains behind those doors."*

Within these communal spaces, the overall functioning of trust and interlinked operating of the school apparatus can also be felt or observed, rather than measured, which extend beyond the staff and to the pupils.

*"It feels good to come to work and ... I'd say that when the trust relationships are okay and authority is correct in the school, it creates its own serene, peaceful atmosphere and where it shows the most is in the pupils, that they feel alright"*

### 3.1.7 Confidentiality in open communication

Within the umbrella of open communication, there is often an assumed standard of confidentiality attached to any dialogue. It is expected that ideas presented are kept confidential, which extends this concept further from the aforementioned working spaces. It can apply to any communication in the professional sphere, whether it be inside the school context or in an individual's life. Most importantly, it is an enabling factor for people to spontaneously speak their mind on matters. *"It means being able to think to act and to express your ideas, opinions without having to be afraid of the consequences."*

## 3.2 Agreeing on procedures

*"When we have common rules in school, there is no need to keep checking on people"*

Agreeing on procedures occurs through communication in the workplace when two or more people reach an agreement regarding expected behaviours, tasks, duties, and outcomes within a nominated time frame. These agreements can be consciously reached and/or subconsciously expected. It can refer to professional conduct (being punctual, completing tasks), yet also extends to behavioural expectations – that each individual will act in a respectful and fair manner toward their duties and each other. The conceptualisation of agreements and upholding them is one of the central tenets of the education workplace in Finland, especially from a principal's point of view. It is often the foundation from which further communications occur, and a base-level of trust is factored in to any agreement. *"The starting point is that we agree on things and also that we trust that you do that, I do this."* Once agreements have been made, it is uniformly expected that they will be upheld. If an agreement is compromised from either individual's perspective, trust is lost rapidly and the process of regaining it is very difficult - arguably one of the most damaging actions in this context. *"This is when confidence is betrayed in things that has influence on everyone's work. Someone*



*promises to take care of something but then he won't do it."*

Adhering strongly to any agreement is demanded in the Finnish education workplace context. Often, it can be considered a 'starting point' for a principal:

*"Well, my basic starting point is that I trust that teachers do their job, that's my basis. That teachers act as they are supposed to act and...it is the basis, and if there is any reason to change my impression, it is a great disappointment for me."*

These agreements rely on open communication for initial understandings and negotiations, as well as the timely acknowledgement of any changes or issues, which can act as a buffer for reducing trust in the event of not being able to meet agreed outcomes. However, the ability to conceive an agreement is dependent on the level of open communication and trust within the workplace. Agreement on procedures is different from, yet dependent on, open communication. The procedures are often explicitly discussed (the responsibility of the individual and manager), and can include with individual ideas, competencies, or beliefs in workplace. Agreeing on procedures can also refer to planning and future events.

*"Every year we, as early as in the spring, we start planning for next autumn, we talk about the previous, I mean the outgoing school year, things that went well, things that failed, things that require development. We're going to do that very soon now –we'll have a training day and talk about what's next, talk about teams, who's going to do what, give out tasks and discuss which things went well, which didn't."*

This is also linked to the idea of common goals and the higher purpose of the educational workplace, which will be discussed in the fourth thematic area. Agreement on procedures is a core concern for a principal, and one that starts from the hiring of a staff member, which is in essence the first agreement between the two individuals – one based on qualifications and presentation of capabilities. The process of being aware of procedures is a continual responsibility of the principal from the perspective of leadership.

*“My solution usually is that we have to give this information out and talk about it and then we agree on procedure, when are we going to give it out and how his career will be now on, will he work as much as he is able to or will he stay away from work, these kinds of procedures because I feel that they make situation easier...also for the ill person because we don't have to cover it up.”*

Often, these agreements need to be revisited or reinforced to maintain strong cohesion within the group. Consequently, there are stringent internal expectations placed on the behaviours and ethics of the teaching community.

*“If we have for example agreed that making any kind of colleague agreements is not allowed, that means, for example, a teacher can go to the doctor on work hours and another teacher will cover for them, if this sort of thing is strictly forbidden and I still catch someone doing it, that they have made an agreement by themselves in order to be somewhere else and not on the job, that's a tangible example of not being able to trust someone, after a clear violation of rules.”*

These agreements can concern minor details that may seem trivial or unnecessary, yet it the culmination of the ‘small efforts’ that exemplify such agreements.

*“There are always these rules...often they are quite little things, for example I could remind some teacher to remember to remind pupils about good dining habits or something. We have agreed on that everyone interferes in things and that everyone works for our common well-being here and it also goes for our school secretary and our school cook and our school nurse and everyone.”*

The foundations of the agreements are the basis from which the workplace can function.

*“If we have agreed on something, we will act according to that, and it is the basis of commonly agreed on rules. If we have agreed on something we will act that way. The operation of this system is based on trust.”*

Reliability is a key criterion in the maintenance of procedural agreement: *“Being reliable is a big factor in this profession.”* This too is often a day-to-day consideration and task that is required from each individual in the workplace.

*“Commitment to work, carrying out every day practises. It shows reliability... if I give a deadline that timetables should be returned on Friday...that one takes care of his duties that I can trust that the papers are returned when I need them.”*

From a principal’s perspective as the administrator, it is essential that they can trust people to keep their word regarding agreements, especially for the functioning of the workplace. However, there is a counter-expectation from the teachers to the principal: in order for the system to operate, the teachers must also trust the principal’s abilities and any subsequent agreements to manage affairs and direct pedagogy.

*“This is built on the fact that I can trust that teachers do things as they are supposed to and act as they are supposed to and on the other hand the principal is someone who in a certain way has to be trusted because he is both the pedagogical and administrative manager of the school appointed by the administration.”*

This is an important element of leadership that is beneficial for principal to display: that they are in control and confident of their actions. The ability to agree on procedural matters is developed over time. When there are new staff, they are an unknown quantity to a group that has spent time working together. It takes time to develop trust of an individual’s ability to uphold agreements, and for it to be reflected by their actions. *“We’ve had new teachers also during this year and I can feel that older teachers think that if a certain duty is given to a new teacher, will they take care of it properly.”*

A uniform response toward individuals toward pupils, parents, and any entity outside of the workplace is a key principle of the need for agreement. The agreed upon procedures for professionalism and conduct not only reassure staff of others' ability, *"I feel teachers should be able to trust each other be able to rely on their word and their actions, of course every teacher has confidence in other teacher's skill,"* but also provide insight into the external pressure and scrutiny under which the profession is placed.

*"If you say one thing and do the other, it won't fly here at school, right away there will be, the parents will start calling, other teachers will complain, they keep a watch out of this sort of thing."*

There is a shared sense of responsibility in the workplace and a vigilant observance toward the consequences that occur from lapses in conduct. Therefore, a uniform approach to procedural matters is adopted and preferred, which also applies in an example of problematic behaviour or the breaking of an agreement. *"The discussion and the interventions based on them should be agreed on together, then we are acting confidentially."* This shared confidence also enables the principal to support their staff in the event of a complaint or any potential transgression.

*"If I get a reclamation by phone like 'the way my child's performance is graded is totally wrong, I don't accept this' I must have the guts to say that this is how things are done in our school and I have to trust that duties we have agreed are done the same way."*

### 3.2.1 Trust built through professionalism

Professionalism largely relates to consistency in actions, agreements, skills and abilities. The essential criterion is acting in a manner that is appropriate within the workplace while displaying appropriate skills. Professionalism can be evident when there are inevitable differences in opinion or views. *“There will be no problems if everyone agrees and respects the rules, but if there are different views it takes professional skill to handle these situations.”* In this aspect, professional skill relates to the abilities and education that a teacher receives, as well as an ability to engage others diplomatically. Professionalism can be conflated with participation – *“Everyone’s participation and trust is needed and I trust that everyone does his work and that we are making progress.”*

Consequently, and especially from a principal’s perspective, professionalism relates closely to maintaining agreements, which in turn, affects trust. “ — holding on to agreements, that increases trust.” These agreements can also be referred to as ‘predictability’, though the outcome can provide the same result.

*“Trust is based on predictability of action. It means that if we have agreed on something I can foresee that things will go like we have agreed, it is very important when we talk about work, it is of primary importance.”*

### 3.2.2 Trust gives more time for the job

Strong workplace trust provides the benefit of not requiring close supervision to perform workplace tasks, which provides more time to focus on the job. The conceptualisation of more time is related to the trust given to an individual to perform tasks independently. The trust that is generated through agreeing on procedures facilitates this process.

*“It is, for example, that you trust the other persons word and actions and things are done or that they are done according to rules when some instructions have been given or when we have common rules in school, so that there is no*

*need to keep checking on people.”*

In this environment, the principal’s administrative role can be supported in important decision-making that affects multiple parties if there is a sufficient level of trust. Moreover, tasks and subsequent results can be shouldered by working groups and the team as a whole, allowing the principal to delegate tasks, affording more time for personal duties.

*“We would have workgroups who take responsibility for reaching the goals of each school year. I have trust that those teams take care of their duties and that members of management group lead those teams and they report to me.”*

In this capacity, *“the teachers work becomes easier,”* as completely shared responsibilities are given the understanding that *“when some instructions have been given or when we have common rules in school, there is no need to keep checking on people.”* This enables people to focus on work and not feel scrutinised at every turn. Trust in the workplace is constructed through having the skills and freedom to work.

*"Yes, among teachers I think they trust their colleagues to do their job correctly even if they have different thoughts and views and a different philosophy on teaching and don't necessarily do it in the same way, I think what follows from that trust is more freedom in doing your job."*

### **3.2.3 Principal responsibilities**

Principal responsibilities refer to keeping a suitable professional distance from subordinate employees while acting as a manager, emphasised by this sentiment: *“The manager should not be a friend and the teacher shouldn’t be the pupil’s friend, that’s how it goes.”* However, this is not always compatible with the social demands of the position, but it is an assumed part of the integrity of the position. It also refers to the responsibility of the principal to ensure team functioning and take leadership when required, regardless of individual opinions. *“Some of them disagree with me, in fundamental matters as well. But still we have agreed on procedures.”*

The responsibilities of leadership can also entail recognising when teachers need to take leadership in day-to-day affairs of the school. When hiring a new member of staff, one respondent entrusted a teacher to be present in the interviews and help make hiring decisions, as a show of openness.

*“During my first years as a principal, I didn’t dare to trust teachers that way but I have learned it during the years. And the person who we are hiring now and who we interviewed had last week, opinion of the teacher who will be his partner, his opinion is very crucial. Because he will be working with the new teacher, not me.”*

In this characterisation, it is valuable to note that the participant states their distinction between subordinates and themselves, and precisely acknowledges that although they have the final say in the employment, it is the teacher who will bear the brunt of contact. This acknowledgement is related to the notion of vulnerability required in trusting relationships. While it is necessary to understand subordination in a practical sense, it is important to foster a hierarchically flat organisation for pragmatic reasons.

Nonetheless, a participant was straightforward about the nature of the principal / teacher relationship. *“Yes, I go over whether he is suitable for this job and for our work community and for being my subordinate.”* There is a contentious relationship between the antecedents of trust in the workplace, and the responsibilities of leadership. When there is conflict, the presence of the subordinate / superior relationship can be emphasised if necessary.

*“If some teacher wants to do things his own way, I tell him that he needs to find a school of just one teacher in some backwater...if one wants to express himself but there is a much more inflexible social code [in the countryside] than in the metropolitan area.”*

Another key priority of keeping a professional distance largely stems from the

desire to appear impartial towards subordinate staff, as a failure to do so can create problems in regard to integrity.

*“Other teachers won’t start to feel that you’re working too closely with some particular teacher, someone might feel there’s something going on, that you’re playing favourites in that kind of community people can get the wrong idea easily even though nothing like that is going on.”*

This alludes to the fragile nature of trust, or rather the more destructive affects that can result from a miss-step within the workplace. When discussing the attitudes of the staff, it is easier to place importance on being open with other staff, as it comes with less liabilities for the position.

*“An individual a teacher must actively seek the company of other teachers and be genuinely interested in what their colleagues are doing and not just go into their own classroom and shut the door and just do their job alone.”*

This would suggest that open communication and spending time together are important for the team’s functioning, yet the principal must find a suitable balance between the positive and potential negative aspects of increased communication. There is also a level of reciprocal trust that is expected from teachers toward the principal, which in turn facilitates the operation of the working environment.

*“This is built on the fact that I can trust that teachers do things as they are supposed to and act as they are supposed to and on the other hand the principal is someone who in a certain way has to be trusted because he is both the pedagogical and administrative manager of the school appointed by the administration.”*

Regardless of pedagogical and administrative prowess, the principal can be expected to make concessions on matters. *“We have decided to all do it that way, even if the manager feel’s it’s wrong, the person’s point of view is respected anyway...that is what I call trust.”* The flattening of hierarchy can be interpreted as gesture towards trust,



whereby the principal is showing vulnerability in their trust of a subordinate.

Principals are also tasked with bringing certain skills to the position, such as providing guidance.

*"Well, their job then is to be professional about it and make use of management methods, such as discussing it with the subordinate to get things on the right track and, and to do the right thing and have confidence in what you're doing."*

There is an expectation of professionalism in confronting topics that may be difficult, drawing on skills to navigate the situation. In this process, a principal must remain careful in regard to how they support and guide their subordinates.

*"If the subordinate trusts their supervisor and therefore looks for the supervisor for support [with emphasis] too much, so that they lose the ability for independent thought and action and go to the principal for everything, so that they become unable to action independently".*

The desire to maintain boundaries is apparent again. However, the manifestation of the boundary is produced by a different requirement. For the team to be able to function effectively together, there must be a level of individual responsibility taken to avoid co-dependency, especially in regard to superiors.

#### **3.2.4 Difficult to rebuild trust**

As trust is highly prized and inter-linked with many other workplace functions, once an individual is deemed as 'untrustworthy', it is very difficult to restore belief in individual and professional competency, and therefore, trust. Often this is linked to breaking a procedure that has been agreed upon. *"You have to look at the facts and have a communicative discussion about how to proceed, are we going to restore it, is it possible, just being up front about it, it can be restored."* In order to repair trust, there needs to be an open discussion about its state. The openness that is required in this

context is similar to the requirement of notifying team-members of changes to agreements. In essence, any damage to trust is a modification of a prior agreement, and it must be renegotiated and subsequently adhered in order to rebuild the ability to trust.

Incompetency (perceived or realised) can erode trust in a similar way. *“There are many things like “he didn’t do that and he didn’t return this” and so on, and trust is crumbling that way.”* Again, the damage to trust appears to be due to inability to agree on a procedure. There is an underlying assumption of basic trust and competency that can also be broken.

*“Well, my basic starting point is that I trust that teachers do their job, that’s my basis. That teachers act as they are supposed to act and...it is the basis, and if there is any reason to change my impression, it is a great disappointment for me.”*

### **3.2.5 Trust is hard to pretend**

As the basis for trust is laid out in the aforementioned categories, it is of little surprise that the pretence of trust is unsustainable in a long-term setting.

*“Not in the long run. It is not possible. At least I feel that I sense the situation...that pretence...it can last for a short period of time, but at some point, it’s either said aloud or it’s understood some other way”*

Either open communication makes the lack of trust evident through communication, or behavioural changes will indicate a problem: avoidance, poor communication, and little commitment to spending time with others.

### 3.3 Professionalism prioritised over emotion

*“My opinion is that in a work community it must be eighty per cent professional skill and twenty per cent emotion.”*

Prioritising professionalism over emotion occurs in everyday aspects of communication and workplace functioning. Professionalism refers to the skills that are employed on a daily basis, as well the communications that facilitate such actions. The expected behaviours include agreeing on procedures, open communication, and respecting confidentiality.

*“Professionalism is also important. If we are talking about some child, it is important to remain professional and not resort to gossiping.”* There is an expectation that each individual acknowledges that they are operating within a highly-skilled workplace, and that conflicts and disagreements are a part of that environment. *“It’s a sign of professionalism that you get over these things.”* Therefore, they must be handled in an appropriate manner. In this capacity, trust can be constructed by professionalism through depending on others’ skill in completing their tasks. Trust is also considered a necessary concept that is fostered during a teacher’s professional training.

*“I think it is about the professional ethics. It just is there, if we think about the teacher’s education, it is something that is built into this profession and this is one reason why we should have qualified teachers in schools because they have the education where this professional basis is built in.”*

Through a focus on professionalism, teachers are equipped with a framework surrounding workplace dialogue, which can also foster open communication. From a professional standpoint, addressing any criticisms, problems, or issues that need to be resolved is beneficial for workplace functioning. *“We are merely human beings so these kinds of feelings might arise, but we should not act according to them and everyone*

*must be treated equally.*” Disagreements are therefore a part of the environment, yet they must be addressed sensibly. The final goal of this clarification is that the task at hand is completed and that the workplace continues to function and communicate openly – that trust is maintained.

The focus on professionalism is significant from a principal’s perspective, as they are required to make decisions that cannot suit every team-member. *“It is their own business what they think about me as a person, everyone doesn’t like everyone but with everyone work is done properly.”* Furthermore, the emphasis towards trust is apparent in the responsibility that is required to lead.

*“They are permitted to like me or dislike me and it should not influence running the school, I have to treat everyone equally despite whether they trust me or not but in professional matters they have to trust me”*

The emphasis on professionalism in the Finnish education context also manifests itself in the functioning of the workforce: it enables people to have faith in a colleagues’ ability, that they can retain full confidence in their behaviour. It is often unspoken expectation and is one that is directly linked to ‘agreeing on procedures’: that people have both the technical expertise to do their job, that they act rationally and professionally, and that they prioritise this over any emotion that may jeopardise it. The prioritisation of professional behaviour is the discerning condition.

However, the complete absence of emotion is not an achievable or desirable condition. Particular instances elicit emotions and need to be correctly addressed.

*“Certainly, in some sense, home affairs inevitably come to school and colleagues see them. For example, if a teacher has small children and if those children get sick and parents have to stay away from work and others have to fill in for them, it is very clear, in that way we are aware of them.”*

Similarly, there is an acknowledgement that teachers are nonetheless susceptible to bouts of emotion in the workplace.

*“In a school environment, I must say, teachers as members of a profession are*

*pretty emotional people, they think emotionally but I try to emphasize the fact that we are professionals and we must get along with each other despite our feelings.”*

Regardless, there is a desire to maintain professionalism, with boundaries being set by the principal that details what is appropriate and inappropriate in the workplace. *“School shouldn’t be a place where for example problems in married life are dealt with. This is not a place for therapeutic activity, either.”*

The type of work relationship with colleagues was often stated as being constructed, with clear boundaries set.

*“And then there is that kind of trust which is related to friendship between teachers and what comes with it but that is a different matter. I consider this as a professional matter; I think that private matters don’t belong to work.”*

The appeared frequently amongst the participants, suggesting that it is a functional, professional matter, as well as a necessary position of the manager: one that establishes functional distance from subordinates. *“This is just a workplace, this is not your whole life”*. Of the participants, one was particularly adamant about creating strict professional divisions between emotion and the workplace, but the remainder of the respondents seemed to agree that there is a need for balance in the workplace. The stringent approach is displayed here in sharing personal life with other staff:

*“I have to be aware of it myself and I have to keep my distance in talking about my personal matters. Of course, I am the age I am, so of course I have pictures of my grandchildren [in my office] but grandchildren are a subject that can always be talked about ... but otherwise, I put up walls around me.”*

Distance is mentioned yet again in regard to conversational topics. *“If we talk about confidential matters which are not work-related then we are in the danger zone.”* Professionalism can be seen to relate to the work domain, and within this text, it could be assumed that emotions regarding an out-of-work context would be deemed a risk. This is further emphasised by a desire to get to know a colleague’s working abilities, as opposed to their personality. *“It’s less about knowing them as an individual or a person or knowing about their life outside the job, but it’s very important to know their philosophy on teaching.”*

This concept is also apparent in the way that staff-members are treated, particularly when it comes to any element of perceived favouritism. Although some participants found it important to be present and engage with staff, all participants were aware of the need to be proactive in countering favouritism. *“But those friendly relations should not affect work so that hierarchies or favouritism arise.”*

Similarly, employee relations can be considered to exist in a very specific environment, and not extend outside of work.

*“I always say that the school is not for entertainment but for work and it has a strong professional basis. Of course, we sometimes have common events, but it can’t be that school would be a place for relationships of the employees.”*

When discussing the failures of professional conduct, it relies on open communication to move forward and re-establish trust, which is based on a professionalism that can facilitate the discussion.

*“In a work community, if between even one person [if even one person loses trust in someone] it affects the whole work community so, so then you, it depends on the case, if it’s a situation that needs to be discussed together, open discussion, openness is something that, and if you need to discuss it with the whole community, that’s one way of doing it, but then you have these private conversations and defusing that possible problem and setting a new direction and giving a reason for your actions.”*

Professionalism can also be necessary in order to shield individuals from any situations from which they are not comfortable with. For example, in an example in which emotion is given, it can create a level of vulnerability (risk) that is unnecessarily high, offering too much trust.

*“I think if you trust somebody and tell them things, unnecessary things about yourself that don’t relate to the work, well then, if there can be too much trust then yes, maybe in that case if it turns against you, if somebody uses the information you’ve shared or offered in confidence against you.”*

This can also relate to acknowledgement of not having the correct skills to handle the situation, and therefore, taking responsibility in admitting it.

*“Where is the dividing line in professionalism? I mean, I am not a therapist and I get emotionally involved, with full speed. I don’t have any chance to draw the line, to categorize those problems and tell them the solutions like a professional [therapist] does.”*

Without professionalism, individuals can risk forming cliques or working blocs by spending less time with people they do not know. It is therefore important to work with any staff member regardless of personal opinions.

*“If we form all the work groups in the work community according to how people get along with each other, it doesn’t work because the quarrelsome people always stay in the same group [laughing] — it doesn’t promote trust or work, it promotes nothing. We have to remain adult, we have to be ninety per cent professional.”*

The ability to communicate with different people is of key importance in professionalism. *“Work must be done regardless of that you don’t trust each other and you also have to collaborate regardless of that you don’t trust each other.”*

Professionalism also refers to an attempt to control the outcomes of work that can be affected by an action: students and teacher's alike.

*“Unfortunately, with those people who I have to argue with most often as a role of the manager...with those people the gap between professional skill and emotion is narrower, it is fifty-fifty or even so that there is only forty per-cent professional skill and sixty per-cent emotion. Then, we are going in a totally wrong direction because you can't control what you need to control.”*

### **3.4. Working for common goals and a higher purpose**

*"We are in this school for the pupil's sake"*

The final theme of the study relates to the motivating factors that encourage people toward the profession. Working for common goals and a higher purpose occurs when there are shared goals and effective communication, and therefore shared knowledge and expectations of professionalism and agreement on procedures in teaching. It is the general calling of the profession, the responsibility of the role, and one of the underpinning motivations of the profession. Nonetheless, for some the rationale can be prescriptive. *“I see the function of school in this society as quite simple and a teacher in school carries out the purposes that have been defined through legislation and the curriculum by a higher quarter.”*

In a sense, working for common goals and a higher purpose acts as a backbone for all the concepts that have been discussed thus far. It is an important motivator for individuals and one that encourages professionalism in the workplace, as there is a



greater cost for any kind of failure when you are responsible for pupils. In turn, the professionalism depends on open communication and a consistent agreement on procedures. The concept of common goals/higher purpose appeared readily apparent from a principal's perspective, as they witness the larger picture and machinations of the education system. *"The principal's interests are the same as the interests of school, the teachers and the pupils."*

Frequently discussed was the desire for their staff to be aware and carry a shared understanding of their task at hand, and more importantly, comprehend the results that it can produce when successful. As teaching is identified as one of the trusted professions in Finland by all the principals, it is important to understand the weight that it carries. There is a powerful cultural norm of societal trust towards the education system. Each principal in the interviews specifically named education as a part of society that people can trust. *"People feel school is a reliable institution"*. There appears to be a motivation to uphold the societal trust towards education.

Understandably, this designation can coax a large amount of responsibility from both an individual and team. *"If we think about the foundations of school, the purpose of school is to teach. The purpose of school is to pass our cultural heritage from one generation to the next, school has no other purpose."*

Within the commitment to the goals of education, it was suggested that it is an inherent part of the structure of the management system.

*"I think it is also consciously built with the managing system, which means that there are teams that are responsible for something and people are committed to work in those teams and everybody's important and everyone has his own role in it and I really hope that everyone has his role in the team."*

Each individual must be able to communicate effectively in order to understand their own role within the workplace, contemplate its importance, and work as a part of the team. The goals of the education workplace are not always explicit, and must be discussed. Working together and open communication facilitate a sense of solidarity through which the importance of the role is constructed.

*"And when you have clear common educational goals, what are the*

*means to achieve them, you have to put emphasis on those goals during staff meetings and training events concerning the collective bargaining agreement [virkaehtosopimuskoulutus] and, and that's part of teaching, so of course knowing each other better helps but on the other hand it's about knowing what were here for [laughing]."*

Perhaps the most grounding factor in the education workplace is a reminder of the purpose and recipients of the work: "*— school is for pupils, not for teachers.*" That purpose can carry over to the well-being of pupils, and is dependent on effective teacher interaction. *"It means that we know we are in this together, the principal, the teachers and the whole staff, we work for the benefit of the children and every one of us is involved in this."*

The solidarity required is palpable in this example, as is the shared understanding forged through effective communication. *"Everyone should be committed to our mutual goals and to the rules of the work community."*

One participant displayed the concept of common goals and a higher purpose through actions and an object inherited from their predecessor.

*"I actually have a skipper's hat [referring to the Finnish saying mentioned in the conversation, to be in the same boat with someone] which I wear few times a year in certain situations - like there's a skipper on a ship and there's a principal in a school. I got the hat from my predecessor. It is more about that we work for our common goals than that I like someone."*

Finally, the long-term and wearing nature of working for a common goal is cited, and perhaps, this best explicates the large amount of effort the maintaining trust demands. It is a culmination of openness, agreements, professionalism, and shared vision that is continuously negotiated and fine-tuned in order to keep the apparatus running.

*"Of course, you need to have the same values. You have to keep in mind who are you doing this for: it's the pupils we're doing this for. And when we*

*have the same goals on education, you have to freshen up those goals from time to time so, so that the teachers won't become cynical."*

#### **4. Discussion**

As previous research surrounding workplace trust has largely focused on the Mayer et al. (1995) model of trust, it is important to consider if Finland's education sector places unique demands on workers within it, particularly from a managerial perspective. The aim of this study was to examine how trust in the Finnish education system from a managerial perspective was conceptualised, and how the conceptualisation of trust relates to the representation of professionalism in the Finnish education system. The main findings of the interview data will now be summarised.

The analysis will be presented in order of occurrence from the interviews, which is somewhat indicative of the importance of each category. Open communication was the most evident manifestation of trust in the Finnish education system. Within this thematic area, there were five sub-codes that provided extra detail of what is encapsulated in open communication: time spent together, prevention of misunderstanding, distrust due to reduced communication, trust necessary for teamwork, and shared working spaces.

The thematic area was highly complex, in that the ability to communicate directly was a key component – one that was required in almost every other code listed. Time together and developing and understanding of colleagues presented a clear image of another person's beliefs. However, time outside work, which is the ideal connection, was difficult to achieve. For a principal, this was a point of contention: crossing a line outside of the professional realm was considered too risky for the leader / subordinate relationship, whereas others prioritised its value. Regardless, the idea of being present was universally acknowledged by principals in order to foster trust from subordinates.

Communication was the tool that prevented misunderstanding, facilitated

decisions through discussion, and lead to a higher trust when other's motives were understood. The lack of communication was resolutely perceived as a result of poor trust and heralded the beginning of poor team dynamics. Through open communication, the necessity of trust in teamwork was realised: the changing role of Finnish educators increasingly relies cooperation and openness. Principals, in turn, expect a strong reciprocal relationship. Principals displayed a base level of trust for their subordinates' ability, and often cited that the same trust in their capacity to effectively lead be granted in a similar fashion.

Following the essential criteria of communication was the second thematic areas, agreeing on procedures. This code, in conjunction with open communication, was cited as a foundation of the profession – the necessary day to day functioning tools of the workplace. Agreeance on behaviours, duties, and time frames covers a large proportion of interactions in the workplace. In essence, agreeing on procedures is the starting point of further developments, and the breaking of any agreement one of the fastest ways to lose trust. It depends on communication in order to renegotiate any changes. This also facilitated a sense of shared rules and understanding, which was key for a principal – to know exactly how their team operated gave them confidence to handle external factors, such as parents, in the event of criticism or questioning.

Within the agreement was a sense of professionalism: a consistency of actions related to agreements made, appropriate skills for the task, and predictability in behaviour. The agreements made often suggested that it enabled staff to have more time to work due to shared understanding and mutual trust. This also enabled an ability to delegate from the principal, as they had confidence in their subordinates. A large factor within agreeing on procedures was the responsibilities of the principal. A theme that was returned to frequently was the need to create distance from employees, yet still maintain an ability to be social, interact, build trust, and lead others. Principal's acknowledged the need trust the actions of their subordinates (be vulnerable), yet also retain the ability to clearly be their superior. The oscillation between these two extremes proved to be one of the hardest balances for the principal to achieve. Distance could be seen as professional, but also as a tool to not engender feelings of favouritism. This risk pointed to the fragile nature of trust and the consequences that occurred with greater ease than the benefits. It also served as a barrier against any kind of co-dependency

from subordinates.

One of the more difficult relationships was that in order to rebuild trust, it required open communication to begin the process. Lack of trust was considered to be nearly impossible to pretend, due to its centrality to the position in the workplace.

The third main category was the prioritisation of professionalism over emotion. This was an often-unspoken agreement on how communication would occur in the workplace. It was stated that it is one that is created by the training of educators, which addresses ethics before starting the job. Professionalism sets boundaries for communication, and opens it up. It is expected that the ability to remain professional is a skill, and that understanding can be achieved based on the set of professional tools. Furthermore, the boundary issue for principals was reiterated: principals are not friends to their subordinates, with the key concern of favouritism occurring if boundaries were not maintained. Professionalism was also important for preventing cliques or working blocs to occur, as it encouraged communication with other people aside from those who an individual was emotionally invested in.

The final theme was working for common goals and a higher purpose. Sharing knowledge and agreed responsibilities / functions of the workplace helped clarify those goals. The education sector was universally identified as a trusted institution, which placed extra pressure on the workforce, which could also act as a motivator. Communication was the essential tool to revitalising and sustain the shared goals, and due to the wearing nature of that responsibility, open communication was key for mitigating fatigue.

From the principal's point of view, trust in the principal was determined by the benevolence and integrity primarily, with ability often assumed. For the principal considering their subordinate, perceived ability and integrity were of prime to concern. Trust as a willingness to be vulnerable was a theme that was repeated throughout the study, where the principal must be vulnerable in some capacities, but then create distance as a manager. There is a very fine line by which they operate and maintain the trust relationship: it requires input, but it cannot be over-developed.

Although the decision to trust or not trust can be in both the hands of the trustor and trustee, there is a common professional code that attempted to minimise the effects of these fluctuations. The 'base-line' of trust was represented through agreeing on

procedures, and working together regardless of individual personal beliefs (emotion). The working environment of education demands open communication for the uniform performance and wide-reaching outcomes that it wishes to deliver – a civic responsibility to educate.

As suggested in (Lapidot et al, 2007), development of trust and distrust does not appear to occur symmetrically. This is important as the development of distrust is easier to provoke, and very costly in the profession. As the tenets of education are founded on professionalism, and professionalism is linked to agreeing on procedures, any mistake in this regard is considered a serious offence in the industry. Through this strict code, trust can be lost extremely quickly, and it can be very hard to regain.

In accordance with Dietz & Den Hartog's (2006) findings, the results of this study suggested that trust can be affected by different organisational levels and scenarios that exhibit trust. Predictability (agreement on procedures, professionalism prioritised over emotion) was a strong theme in the Finnish education context, and perhaps one that could be applied to select cultural contexts for further investigation.

As noted in Lapidot et al. (2007), trust in a supervisor was referred to in this study as being more related to benevolence and integrity, as opposed to ability. The results of this study do suggest support for this finding. However, it is important to consider that the participants were imagining this relationship themselves, rather than the teacher's own opinion. This is perhaps considered a limitation of the data; however, it is useful to understand that this is the conception of the relationship from a superior's position.

The importance of trust in a supervisor as found in Gill and Knoll (2011) was also present in this study. As the principal is in a position of management and leadership, their work and efficacy in the position can be an important consideration for all subordinates. In Gill and Knoll (2011), trust in the supervisor was found to indicate the condition of trust within the organisation. In this study, the principals were attuned to the idea that their position carried a similar level of importance and responsibility. As a manager, it was important for principals that they fostered a level of trust (communication, procedural adherence, and professionalism) that enabled the school to function. This dilemma was also evident in creating the professional boundary between colleagues and subordinate, which principals often had to negotiate. Similarly, benevolence and integrity were the most-referred to qualities in a supervisor, whereas the main quality for the principal's trust in subordinates was ability.

Lapidot et al. (2007) argued that specific importance for trust qualities based on the context and position of an individual. They identified benevolence as one of the most salient trust-building qualities in a leader in less-vulnerable situations, and lack of integrity as the quality that can erode trust the most. This is evident in the demand for open communication in the Finnish education environment, as it can be assumed that openness is a possible reflection of integrity for subordinates. Similarly, benevolence of the leader was found to be a key in the current study, in the sense that it gave the principal an opportunity to connect with their subordinates. The pressures of finding the correct balance between being the superior and reflecting these qualities to subordinates (benevolence and integrity) was a commonly cited bind.

This study presented specific findings regarding trust and leadership in the Finnish education context, which can be used to further examine trust constructs in similarly specific workplaces. However, the study had limitations based on collection of data. The final process of grounded theory, whereby it is possible to revisit participants and ask further questions, was unable to be achieved. This hindered the final process of analysis, and therefore, impacted on the final sharpening of focus. Furthermore, although the study illuminates important aspects of trust, it does have trouble differentiating concepts from one another: they are often interlinked and inter-dependent. It would be important for future studies to carefully separate the constructs identified, in order to further pinpoint their relationship with trust.

## 5. Appendices

### Appendix. 1

The following is an example of the types of questions asked as the interview progressed. “How do you feel about the level of trust between [teachers / teachers and principals] in your own school (high, low, good, bad, something else, compared to what, etc.)?”; “Is trust among [teachers / teachers and principals] something which just exists or not or is it built somehow?”; “What is trust based upon, or how is it built? What consequences are there if there is trust between [teachers / teachers and principals]? How does it affect your daily work?”; “What consequences are there if there is no trust between [teachers / teachers and principals]? How does it affect your daily work?”; “What creates (or might create) distrust between [teachers / teachers and principals]?”; “Can trust be lost between [teachers / teachers and principals]? If not, why not? If yes, how?”; “If it is lost, can it be recovered? If yes, how? If not, why not?”; “Can there be too much trust between [teachers / teachers and principals]?”; “Do [teachers / principals] ever try to fake they are trustworthy? Do they try to show they can be trusted when they actually can’t be? Do they try to look more trustworthy than they really are?”; What kind of things make you feel that you are trusted or not trusted by your [colleagues / teachers / principals]?”; “Are there differences between primary and secondary schools (in your country or city) considering the level of trust between [teachers / teachers and principals]?”.

The interviewees were then presented with two fictitious cases that they were asked to



discuss: “You are hiring a new teacher and you have almost made up your mind, but then you start to think if you can trust him/her. What kind of things do you probably think about? Why? What kinds of clues tell you whether the new teachers can be trusted or not? Why?” The principals’ second case was as follows: “You have previously trusted a teacher in your school but now you do not anymore trust him/her. What do you think, what has happened, why don’t you trust this teacher anymore?”

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